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ABSTRACT

This guide is intended to assist states and service delivery areas (SDAs) in addressing the new oversight responsibilities and opportunities stipulated by the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA). The first section examines the objectives and outcomes of the project to develop this and the other eight JTPA evaluation guides in the series. A listing of the nine volumes in the set is provided. The next two sections discuss the benefits and special features of each of the guides. A product summaries section includes detailed descriptions of the individual guides. Each description addresses some or all of the following: purpose of the individual guide, utility to users, assumptions, framework, and complementary use. Instructions for obtaining the materials and a list of acknowledgments conclude the volume. (MN)

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EVALUATION DESIGN PROJECT

JTPA Evaluation at the State and Local Level

Volume I: Overview

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CE 046 385

March 1986

Special appreciation is expressed to the National Commission for Employment Policy, for serving as the project's national sponsor and contributing substantial staff consultation to the project as it developed.

Project Development and Coordination:

Washington State Employment Security
Isiah Turner, *Commissioner*

Project Funding:

National Commission for Employment Policy
IBM Corporation
Washington State Employment Security

Having worked at all levels of the JTPA system, beginning at the local level and moving to the SDA and ultimately the state administrative level, I have seen at all these levels responsible managers and people with a genuine desire to make the JTPA program as successful as possible. As managers we often have a pretty good idea whether or not our programs are working. But it is one thing to have a good idea that all is fine and quite another to convince those outside the program, such as the Congress, that the public is getting its money's worth from the JTPA program.

In this era of information technology, we have little trouble thinking about the contribution sophisticated information systems make to the management of programs such as JTPA. But we know that computers do not replace good management practices or the development of policies responsive to the needs of the people the JTPA program was designed to help. The technology we need to think more about in this respect is social science research. Although managers have always had responsibility for judging the adequacy of their programs, they have not always had reliable, practical tools with which to evaluate them.

We now need evaluation tools not only for studying the return on the public's investment, but tools which help us manage our JTPA programs better. The program has passed its introductory phase. We are now expecting a fine-tuning, a maturing process. We need detailed analyses of each of the parts and processes within the JTPA system. We need to see where we are most effective and where we can make improvements.

When we think of evaluation technology as a management tool, we see it as something capable of helping us accomplish tasks that would be very difficult or impossible to achieve without that tool. It should be easier for the JTPA manager to make decisions. The information that comes out of an evaluation effort should provide direction in setting policies and establishing procedures.

But we should understand that the use of evaluation may involve change. And change brings risk. As we consider the risks associated with conducting evaluations, we should also remember the risks we take in not using what applied social research can offer us in understanding our program better. As Congress and the President develop plans to balance the federal budget, the pressure will be on all domestic programs to prove their worth. If the technology of evaluation can be used to help us, we should seriously consider making the best use of it we can.

When the JTPA program came about, we were given a substantial amount of independence and control over implementation, as well as over program monitoring and evaluation. As managers are able to join together in areas like evaluation, we can only strengthen our position and improve the quality of our service to the public.

Isiah Turner
Commissioner, Washington Employment Security
National Governors Association Policy Conference

PROJECT ABSTRACT

The purpose of the JTPA EVALUATION DESIGN PROJECT is to assist states and SDAs in effectively addressing their new oversight responsibilities and opportunities under the Job Training Partnership Act. Based on the assumption that a substantial number of states and local service areas want to develop a more sophisticated program evaluation capability but need program-specific management tools for doing so, the project has produced a set of guides and issue papers to assist them in carrying out comprehensive evaluations of JTPA over its two year planning cycle.

The guides suggest complementary approaches and methods for learning more about the way JTPA is being carried out and its impact on participants and employers. The issue papers recommend ways to judge tradeoffs between program costs and benefits, and increase the utility of management information systems for supporting evaluation activities.

Consistent with the partnership principle underlying the Act, the project's implementation has involved funding, design and advisory partnerships whose unusual blend of expertise and experience has made a unique contribution to the products.

Although the management tools produced in this project have been purposely tailored to state and local JTPA evaluation needs and resources, they can be usefully applied to other employment and training efforts and to other social programs.

PREFACE

In 1983, prior to the development of a design for a state-wide JTPA Management Information System, the Washington Employment Security Department produced a concept paper on evaluation issues in JTPA. The purpose was to sensitize the designers to the need for an MIS which served not only monitoring functions, but also evaluation. Based on this interest in evaluation, in 1984 the Department submitted an unsolicited proposal to the National Commission for Employment Policy and the IBM Corporation for the purpose of developing evaluation tools which could be used by states and SDAs in evaluating their JTPA programs.

In late 1984 sufficient funding was acquired from the National Commission for Employment Policy (NCEP), the Corporate Support Program of the IBM Corporation and the Employment Security Department to initiate and implement the project. A project team was created within the Department to coordinate and oversee the project, contracting was completed with appropriate consultants, a national advisory group was established and the design work began early in 1985. An additional fund search produced an array of valuable in-kind contributions of research consultation, participation by additional advisors, printing, computer software, and the use of facilities and equipment.

Serving as the project's national sponsor, the NCEP viewed the project as a way to stimulate interest in state and local evaluation consistent with the Act, and assist states and SDAs in developing the capability to produce information which was sufficiently comparable to make a contribution to training policy at the national, state and local level. One of IBM's major funding priorities was to encourage improved public policy research. The project satisfied IBM's interest in supporting objective assessments of tax-supported social programs. The Washington Employment Security Department was keenly aware of the challenge of new gubernatorial oversight responsibilities. The need to initiate a technical assistance effort to meet this challenge provided strong motivation to contribute to the project.

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INTRODUCTION

This volume is the first in a series of related evaluation materials produced by the JTPA EVALUATION DESIGN PROJECT. This overview briefly describes the project's purposes and orientation and outlines the various materials available through the project. The emphasis here is on the distinctive features of each evaluation product, its utility for JTPA state and local users, and how the products interrelate and complement one another.

PROJECT PURPOSE

The purpose of the JTPA EVALUATION DESIGN PROJECT has been to develop evaluation tools that are useful to states and local service delivery areas in judging how JTPA programs are being managed and how they are impacting program participants and employers. These analytic and managerial tools are based on sound program concepts and research methods and are designed such that the information obtained is of practical and direct use in improving JTPA policies and programs at both the state and local level. This kind of information is also expected to make a unique contribution to national training policy and Federal oversight of JTPA.

The Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) has created a new legislative context for planning and implementing the nation's employment and training programs. This context includes a much enhanced administrative and planning role at the state level, while allowing for substantial policy and program initiative at the local level. The Federal oversight role has been substantially redefined, resulting in new evaluation opportunities and responsibilities for states and SDAs.

Previously, the Federal government was the predominant actor in the formulation of employment and training evaluation policy, the funding of evaluation research, and the dissemination of evaluation findings. Now the states and SDAs must play a leading role in assessing JTPA. But they face this new role with limited experience in evaluation policy-making, design, and implementation. The materials created by the JTPA EVALUATION DESIGN PROJECT and presented here are part of a research effort to assist both states and SDAs in formulating a new evaluation response to JTPA. It is hoped that these materials will both stimulate and support innovative state and local JTPA evaluation efforts.

An additional purpose of the project is to promote greater consistency across states and SDAs with respect to the evaluation issues studied and the research methods used to explore these issues. An important goal is to encourage the generation of comprehensive information on both program implementation and program impact that is comparable across both states and SDAs. Comprehensive, comparable evaluation information is essential to the development of a broader knowledge base for analyzing and improving JTPA at the national as well as local and state levels.

MENU OF EVALUATION PRODUCTS

Consistent with the above purposes, the project has produced a number of specialized materials to assist states and SDAs in evaluating JTPA. These materials address issues pertinent to all phases of JTPA program evaluation: designing, planning, and implementing. They are packaged in an eight-volume set entitled JTPA Evaluation at the State and Local Level. In each set, in addition to this introductory Overview, the following planning and evaluation guides and evaluation issue papers are available:

Volume I:	Overview
Volume II:	A General Planning Guide (State or Local version)
Volume III:	A Guide for Process Evaluations
Volume IV:	A Guide for Gross Impact Evaluations
Volume V:	A Guide for Net Impact Evaluations
Volume VI:	An Implementation Manual for Net Impact Evaluations
Volume VII:	Issues Related to Net Impact Evaluation
	A. Issues in Evaluating Costs and Benefits
	B. The Debate Over Experimental Vs. Quasi-Experimental Design
Volume VIII:	MIS Issues in Evaluating JTPA

The volumes in this set are organized to respond to the differing needs of both state and local users. The set includes distinct state and local versions of Volume II, The General Planning Guide. A fuller description, of each of the basic volumes is found in the final section of this overview.

The above volumes are designed to offer JTPA users a fairly selective yet diversified menu of technical assistance products to meet a variety of evaluation needs and interests. Taken together, these products support comprehensive evaluations over the JTPA planning cycle. However, users may also wish to choose certain volumes from among this expanded menu.

While recognizing the important differences in state vs. local evaluation issues, the products have also been developed with a respect for common evaluation needs, including the need for both states and SDAs to obtain and analyze their own data and the need to compare information across subcontractors, SDAs and states. Although this set of evaluation products has been developed specifically for JTPA, the basic principles and methods can be applied more broadly to the evaluation of other employment and training programs and other social programs.

BENEFITS OF THE PRODUCTS

The general benefits of these evaluation products to state and local users are simple and direct. There are hundreds of studies of government-subsidized employment and training programs and thousands of books and articles on evaluation research methods to be applied to these programs. The volumes available through this project are based on a careful review of such materials and represent a condensation of those that are most relevant. However, the volumes go beyond existing evaluation materials and studies in providing JTPA users with:

- STATE-OF-THE-ART APPROACHES TO ASSESSING JTPA PROGRAM OPERATIONS AND OUTCOMES
- PRACTICAL AND VALID METHODS FOR COLLECTING AND ANALYZING EVALUATION DATA
- TIME-SAVING GUIDELINES FOR CARRYING OUT STEPS IN THE EVALUATION PROCESS
- A COMPENDIUM OF RELEVANT REFERENCES AND SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION

SPECIAL FEATURES OF THE PRODUCTS

The evaluation guides and related issue papers have been designed with the needs of the JTPA evaluator, program operator and policy-maker in mind. A number of special features have been incorporated into these evaluation products in order to make them as useful as possible to a wide range of users. Before describing each volume, the special features of the products as a whole are highlighted below.

Orientation To State and Local Users: These evaluation materials have been developed with a sensitivity to the differing orientations and priorities of both state and local JTPA users. Separate state and local versions of the General Planning Guide address the different planning contexts in which SDAs and states must operate. As a companion piece to A Guide for Process Evaluations, the volume's supplement outlines an approach to studying JTPA process issues of particular relevance to state users. The remaining volumes distinguish between and respond to the differing state and local program environments in which evaluation must take place.

Practical Approach: These materials attempt to balance the researcher's concern for scientific competence with the practitioner's call for practical utility in the evaluation effort. To achieve such balance, members of the Project's National Advisory Committee and other state and local JTPA practitioners have provided valuable information and suggestions to project consultants. The resulting guides and issue papers discuss evaluation activities within a realistic program context, acknowledging the real world constraints and influences affecting the evaluation process.

Flexible Application: The evaluation designs presented in these guides offer sufficient flexibility that evaluation activities can be modified to meet the particular needs of a given JTPA program context.

Comprehensiveness: Taken as a whole, the evaluation materials enable the user to carry out comprehensive assessments of JTPA programs. They allow the user to acquire several different perspectives on the same program within a particular time period. The user can interrelate information on program implementation, program outcomes, and net impacts to gain a wider understanding of what is happening in a program and why.

Accessibility: The materials have been written and organized in a readily understandable fashion. To the degree possible, technical

language in the main text and, where necessary, is explicated so that the non-specialist can have access to and appreciate the concepts and issues presented.

Supplemental Planning Guide: The various evaluation guides are supplemented by a General Planning Guide. The guide through separate state and local versions assists users in planning, funding and developing an organizational capacity to carry out process, gross outcome and net impact evaluations and to utilize their results.

PRODUCT SUMMARIES

The summaries on the following pages are intended to provide the user with more specific information about each of these volumes. It should be noted that Volume V, A Guide for Net Impact Evaluations, is sufficiently technical because of the statistical methods involved that a practical manual, Volume VI, has been written to accompany it. The guide and manual tend to be more appropriate for states since relatively large sample sizes are required for analysis. However, they are equally useful to larger SDAs and consortia of smaller SDAs which may want to jointly study the collective net impact of their programs. Regional evaluations, for example, can be very productive in providing management information relevant to regional labor markets.

Also, although there is a separate volume, Volume VII, which addresses the evaluation of costs and benefits at both the SDA and state level, this issue is covered in the gross and net impact guides as well. In this respect users benefit from three related but distinct approaches to this important element of program evaluation.

VOLUME II

A GENERAL PLANNING GUIDE: STATE AND LOCAL VERSIONS

PURPOSE
To provide practical information on ways in which state and local JTPA evaluation efforts can be planned, funded and maintained organizationally, and their results utilized for improving policies and programs. These are issues which cut across the specific evaluation research approaches and methods described in other volumes. Separate state and local planning guides recognize the different organizational contexts and environments of evaluation planning at the two levels.

UTILITY TO USER
Assists the user in better understanding complementary evaluation approaches and the different kinds of information they can provide, and suggests practical ways to develop and sustain fiscal, technical and organizational support for state and local evaluation efforts.

ASSUMPTIONS
States and SDAs have new oversight opportunities and responsibilities in JTPA, but may lack a history of evaluation experience and a current capability to perform evaluation tasks consistent with their new role. Consequently some states and local service areas need assistance in assessing the need for particular kinds of evaluation information, and in planning and supporting evaluation activities.

FRAMEWORK
The planning guides provide useful information on the meaning of process, gross impact and net impact evaluations, the content of the evaluation guides and issue papers, and the way the project's materials fit together to provide comprehensive information about JTPA. They develop an overall planning context and suggest a series of planning tasks which can help practitioners decide when and how to evaluate, what the organizational constraints and supports for evaluation are likely to be, what its benefits are and what it may cost, and how an evaluation effort can be constructed and maintained.

The guides also address important resource planning issues such as the formulation of evaluation questions, the development of an evaluation plan, the funding and staffing of evaluation activities, and the organizational implications of data collection. Utilizing information from interviews and informal discussions with numerous Federal, state and local JTPA administrators and operators, specific examples of state and local orientations and experiences with respect to evaluation enhance the volume's usefulness to those who are expected to make decisions about evaluation, and those involved in carrying out program evaluations. An extensive bibliography refers the user to additional sources of information on evaluation and evaluation planning.

COMPLEMENTARY USE
The planning guides uniquely complement the more technical evaluation guides and issue papers. In examining basic evaluation planning and implementation issues within the specific context of JTPA, and in honoring the variety of

interests represented among potential users, the planning guides provide a valuable pragmatic perspective on evaluation which is directly relevant to JTPA practitioners considering ways to carry out their evaluation mandate. The guide's planning recommendations lay the necessary organizational groundwork for process, gross impact and net impact evaluations.

VOLUME III

A GUIDE FOR PROCESS EVALUATIONS

PURPOSE
To obtain information about the organizational characteristics of JTPA implementation at the SDA and subcontractor level, with greatest attention given to those features intended in the legislation to produce desired program outcomes. This information includes the nature of the key parts of JTPA organizations at these levels, and the extent to which these parts fit effectively.

UTILITY TO USER
Assists the user in understanding how program implementation mechanisms and processes work, and what their implications are for the achievement of program goals. It provides managers with a flexible evaluation tool for examining the strengths and weaknesses of local JTPA organizations in meeting their performance standards and achieving their legislated goals for clients. It helps pinpoint organizational problems and opportunities which require new or improved management strategies.

ASSUMPTIONS
While outcome assessment is important in judging the results of JTPA activities, its purpose does not include an investigation of how such results may have been obtained. Managers need both kinds of information in order to identify what areas of program operation require the most attention, and to devise methods for achieving better results. Understanding the relationships among significant organizational factors which shape the implementation of the program enables managers to better comprehend and explain the level of compliance with Federal or state-adjusted performance standards, and the achievement of employment, earnings, and welfare goals for different client groups.

The importance of outcome evaluations is well established. Appreciating the value of process studies has been a more recent development. To satisfy the comprehensive assessment mandate in JTPA, evaluations of program implementation are essential. Each social program has a set of goals for redressing a social problem experienced by a group of individuals judged deserving of government assistance. Each program has an organizational strategy for accomplishing these goals with that group. To fine-tune such programs, information about both the nature of implementation and the quality of outcomes is needed.

FRAMEWORK
The guide presents a framework for studying the organizational aspects of JTPA which are expected to successfully link clients with employers. Within this framework, the SDA (or the subcontractor) is viewed as an "organizational system" composed of interrelated parts, or "components," which work together to produce JTPA outcomes. These components involve both internal aspects of JTPA organizations, and characteristics of the environment in which JTPA is implemented. Relationships among internal structures and processes, and between JTPA organizations and their environments, are perceived as having various levels of "fit," or consistency between parts. An effective fit is expected to increase an organization's ability to achieve its goals.

The major questions examined are whether all the necessary organizational components are present, how consistent they are with one another, how well they fit overall, and what the quality of the mesh is between the organization and its environment. The subjects studied are a range of participants in the organizational system and its environment: policymakers, managers, service delivery staff, clients and employers.

METHODS

Using a model of the JTPA organizational system as a guide, the parts of the system and their interrelationships are treated as the system's "structure"; the flows of resources and information through the system are considered its "processes." The latter are controlled by inputs to the system in the form of key revenue, personnel and access decisions made at critical discretionary points. The outputs of the system are its client outcomes. Inputs are transformed into outputs through the organization's "conversion process," which consists of the organization's mission, activities, coordination effort and social climate.

Each of these major components is broken down into its most important dimensions, and practical methods are suggested for systematically examining them. Ways to integrate this information in order to make judgments of fit are recommended. This includes a discussion of ways to identify problem areas and develop methods for addressing organizational problems.

Data sources for studying program implementation are varied, depending on the component or dimension studied. They range from easily accessible program documents and MIS data, to flexible and more structured questionnaire and interview strategies involving key actors in the organizational system and its environment. Quantitative statistical methods can be used in analyzing the more easily quantified information, while qualitative methods are recommended for drawing inferences from other kinds of data.

COMPLEMENTARY USE

Process evaluations carried out prior to gross or net impact studies can contribute important insights about the most useful interventions, outcomes and client groups to study, and the most likely sources of bias in service delivery policies and processes which must be taken into consideration. Carried out concurrently with, or following impact evaluations, process studies can provide important information about why the observed short or longer term outcomes or net impacts may be occurring. This information supports the replication of successful programs, and informs managers about the source of problems in the less successful.

VOLUME III SUPPLEMENT

SOME PROCESS ISSUES AT THE STATE LEVEL

PURPOSE
To obtain information on the development and implementation of state JTPA policies which help shape or otherwise affect the organizational structures and processes of SDAs or subcontractors.

UTILITY TO USER
Assists the user in understanding how the characteristics of state policies and the way they are carried out may influence JTPA at the local level. Managers are provided with a tool for developing more effective state policies, which enhance the functioning of the statewide service delivery system while respecting the autonomy and diversity of SDAs.

ASSUMPTIONS
States receive the Federal funds supporting JTPA, and are expected to institute controls over the use of these funds by SDAs, as well as to monitor SDA operations and program results. Therefore they are required to develop fiscal and nonfiscal policies with respect to these privileges and responsibilities. Such policies then affect the way in which JTPA is implemented at the local level. Without a knowledge of the influences created by these policies, process evaluations at the local level. Without a knowledge of the influences created by these policies, process evaluations at the local level lack important information on the larger state environment. Also, states and SDAs need to be able to determine the major sources of problems in program implementation at both the policy and practice level.

FRAMEWORK
Policy issues in each major area of state responsibility identified in the Act are examined within an organizational model of the "statewide service delivery system." The legislated roles and responsibilities of each organizational entity within this system are used to elaborate the model. The major features of the system are viewed as decentralization, local autonomy and the existence of multiple organizations: state, SDA, and subcontractor organizations. The characteristics of relationships among the latter, and the attributes of state "performance control systems" are important influences selected for study.

Major process questions address resource allocation, control and coordination issues associated with the activities of State Job Training Coordinating Councils and programs funded by JTPA set-asides, and with state functions such as performance monitoring and service targeting. The statewide service delivery system is also analyzed in terms of the organizational constraints to and supports for state policy development as well as implementation responsive to local needs and interests.

METHODS
Using a model of the policy formation and implementation process which sharpens its major features for analysis, guidelines are suggested for tracing the influence and consequences of state policies with respect to SDA and subcontractor operations. Special attention is given to the constraints

imposed by the characteristics of the statewide delivery system, such as the limitations of state performance monitoring systems, the paucity of administrative resources and the geographical separation of organizations within the system. The guidelines involve an analysis of state policies in the context of a series of chronological steps in the policy process: beginning with problem identification, moving to the proposal of alternative policies and the making of a policy decision, and ending with the implementation of the policy. This process is illustrated using the youth dropout problem.

COMPLEMENTARY USE

As a supplement to Volume III, this material is to be used in conjunction with the local level process guide, offering a complementary perspective on JTPA program implementation. Used together the two process approaches provide broad information on both SDA operations and the larger environment which sets the parameters for these operations. The state process supplement can provide insights which help explain local level implementation, and further inform the results of outcome evaluations. Information on policy development can help locate the source of biases imbedded in state level resource allocation and service targeting decisions, for which controls must be developed in impact studies.

VOLUME IV

A GUIDE FOR GROSS IMPACT EVALUATIONS

PURPOSE

To obtain information on a broad range of post-program outcomes experienced by JTPA participants and employers, to compare outcomes for different groups of participants, and to analyze the impact of different service treatments or service providers on selected outcomes. Systematic descriptions and comparisons of outcomes are intended to provide timely information which can form a baseline for studying stability and change in outcomes over time, and afford insights about causal relationships between outcomes and different kinds of implementation practices and service treatments.

UTILITY FOR USER

Assists the user in fine-tuning planning, management and service delivery at the state and local level by providing a knowledge base on a variety of well measured post-program outcomes. It develops information on those service strategies which appear to be most successful, and provides prompt information for identifying emerging problems in achieving goals which require more immediate managerial action. Such information assists states in judging relative SDA performance levels, gives SDAs a basis for making assessments of the comparative performance of subcontractors, and is useful in determining the direction of technical assistance efforts.

ASSUMPTIONS

Continuously updated information on a wide variety of post-program outcomes for clients and employers serves important management purposes. At the state level this information offers an empirical basis for resource allocation and the adjustment of SDA performance standards. Comparative information on outcomes can identify strong and weak areas of service delivery in local programs, enhance planning and encourage innovation. And it can help establish the legitimacy of state and local management policies and activities. Gross impact analysis cannot estimate the nature of cause and effect relationships as precisely as can experimental research. However, the relative effects of different program services and implementation styles can be estimated with sufficient precision to offer valuable guidance to program managers.

FRAMEWORK

The model developed for gross impact evaluations has a dual focus. The first is on a <u>description</u> of the nature and level of participants' post-program labor market and related experiences, and the characteristics of outcomes for employers associated with JTPA. The second focus is on <u>comparisons</u> of the relative effectiveness with which different forms of program implementation and different service options produce desired outcomes. Alternative forms of agency implementation, such as policies directing service delivery, and alternative service strategies, such as program activities to which individuals are assigned, are viewed as "program variants" which represent important explanatory variables in studying the meaning of gross outcomes. Within the latter focus, comparisons of client and employer outcomes for different service providers are usually more appropriate for states, whereas comparisons of these outcomes for different service treatments are typically more useful for SDAs.

The measurement of the key variables offers options to states and SDAs in terms of the types of measures and data sources that can be utilized. Participant service variants can include the kinds of basic program activities and support services assigned to clients, as well as important characteristics of these treatments. In studying outcomes for employers, measures can involve the employer's perspective on participants' outcomes, in addition to fiscal and nonfiscal costs and benefits of the program to employers. Measurement alternatives are discussed in terms of their reliability and expense.

The subjects of study are program participants terminated in any status and measured at a follow-up point, and three kinds of employers: those providing services, those hiring job-ready participants who have received only job search assistance, and those hiring participants who have received more extensive services.

METHODS

Two sets of methods are suggested, neither of which require the use of an untreated comparison group. Systematic descriptive analysis yields percentage distributions and averages with respect to gross outcomes. Differential impact analysis utilizes multivariate analysis methods to compare outcomes for the purpose of estimating associations between outcomes and implementation practices or service interventions. In carrying out the latter type of analysis, statistical controls are introduced to reduce error and bias.

Telephone surveys of participants and employers provide the data for both kinds of analysis. All, or a representative sample of participants are to be interviewed at three months. The guide explicitly addresses possible DOL follow-up requirements and ways to integrate additional data collection with them. Methods for longer term follow-up are elaborated.

Three optional surveys are described for obtaining information on employers: a survey of termination employers, a survey of participating employers, and a multi-purpose survey combining employer and participant data. Alternatives are suggested for deciding the best measurement points for employer surveys. The issues of sample size and differential analysis requirements at the state and local level are elaborated. The use of ready-made survey instruments is discussed, and a set of pretested surveys is provided. Both data collection and analysis methods are thoroughly described. Cost estimates and aids for implementing gross impact analyses are provided in appendices.

COMPLEMENTARY USE

Because of the wide variety of variables that can be studied, gross impact evaluations can help sort out the more important outcomes, implementation characteristics and service treatments for continuing study in future gross impact analyses or net impact studies. Information produced by differential gross impact analyses can place process and net impact results into broader perspective. Process analysis can help identify the main influences within the JTPA organizational system affecting an extensive spectrum of client and employer outcomes, and suggest controls for reducing bias in gross and net impact studies. Net impact evaluation can estimate the net effect of service interventions on clients, while gross impact analyses can expand the interpretation of such results through estimates of the differential effects of varying treatment and implementation strategies for employers as well as clients.

VOLUME V

A GUIDE FOR NET IMPACT EVALUATIONS

PURPOSE
To obtain information on JTPA's short and longer-term "return on investment" for adults in Title IIA. That is, to obtain valid estimates of the average net impacts of JTPA programs on participants' post-program outcomes, attributing to program participation only the incremental gain in labor market and welfare experiences that occurs over and above what would have happened had these individuals not participated in the program. Valid estimates are defined as those which are unbiased and statistically reliable, and which can be generalized to the entity which is the focus of the evaluation--i.e. to an entire state, a large SDA, or a group of SDAs.

UTILITY TO USER
Assists the user in determining to what extent the employment, earnings, and welfare outcomes observed in the program are due to JTPA interventions or to other influences.

ASSUMPTIONS
States and SDAs will not generally be willing to implement an experimental design in which eligible applicants are randomly assigned to treatment-control status, or to conduct follow-up interviews with a large sample of participants and comparison group members. However, the program's true return on investment cannot be determined without comparing the outcomes of participants with the outcomes of similar individuals who have not received program services. Consequently, the identification and measurement of a reliable comparison group is critical to the evaluation of net impact. Given these assumptions, the approach taken in studying net impact must be a practical one which utilizes existing data sources, and respects the constraints and resource supports in state and local environments.

FRAMEWORK
The framework for the analysis of net impact involves a study of relationships between JTPA interventions and outcomes which are embodied in the following questions:

> What is the overall net impact of JTPA programs on participants' post-program labor market experiences?
>
> How do the net impacts change over time?
>
> For which program activities (treatments) are the net impacts the largest?
>
> Do individuals who remain in JTPA longer experience greater net gains in labor market outcomes?
>
> How does the net impact of JTPA vary by local program environments?

These relationships are to be analyzed separately for men and women. Within the two groups, the analysis is to differentiate on the basis of age, ethnicity, educational level and welfare recipient status. The basic program interventions to be studied are classroom training, on-the-job training, work experience and job search assistance. The participant outcomes to be studied

are employment status, earnings, AFDC participation status and amount of AFDC grant received. Controls for the environment in which JTPA is being operated are local unemployment rate and urban/rural status. The possibility of studying the effects of different service strategies is included, provided there are significant quantifiable differences in these strategies across subcontractors or SDAs.

METHODS

A rigorous research design and methods for data collection and analysis are described, including: 1) a sampling strategy; 2) procedures for constructing a comparison group and determining its adequacy; and 3) techniques for estimating and adjusting for errors and biases in the analysis. The comparison group chosen is Employment Service registrants for whom employment and earnings information is available from Unemployment Insurance records. The method for drawing the comparison sample, including the time frame for selection and the cases to be excluded, is fully detailed. Recommended sources of information on participant and comparison group characteristics and outcomes, and on service interventions, are existing ongoing administrative data systems: state Employment Service records, Unemployment Insurance wage and benefit history records, welfare administration grant records, the JTPA management information system, and data systems providing local labor market information.

COMPLEMENTARY USE

Information from state and local process evaluations is an important input to a net impact study. In identifying the characteristics of participant selection and assignment processes, and differences in the content and recording of program interventions, process analysis can provide insights about the direction and magnitude of biases which could result in misinterpretation of net impact findings. Process analysis can also suggest quantifiable variables that should be included in net impact studies, and controls useful in reducing potential biases. Process evaluations may also help explain net impact results, or suggest emerging issues that are important to study using a rigorous research design. Because gross impact studies utilize surveys of participants and employers, they can enrich net impact findings with information on a wider range of participants and outcomes, and a greater variety of comparisons. Data permitting, this information can suggest causal relationships to be studied in future net impact evaluations.

VOLUME VI

AN IMPLEMENTATION MANUAL FOR NET IMPACT EVALUATIONS

PURPOSE
To provide the user with a practical step-by-step manual which increases the usability of the more technical net impact guide.

UTILITY TO USER
Assists the user in better understanding and applying the sophisticated methodological techniques required in making rigorous net impact assessments.

FRAMEWORK AND METHODS
The manual is organized to direct the user to the chronology of evaluation activities essential in obtaining valid estimates of net impact. First, a series of overviews is provided which alerts the user to the major questions to be answered, the key variables to be defined, and the kinds of data sources required. Second, the methodological steps involved in sampling and in data collection and analysis are detailed, beginning again with an overview of the basic elements of the recommended research design. Methods for constructing an appropriate comparison group are explained pragmatically and in detail. A summary of data collection and processing tasks is followed by step-by-step procedures for carrying them out, including the creation and merging of data files for analysis purposes. Practical steps in performing the statistical analysis include estimation and adjustment strategies for dealing with selection bias. The tasks involved in testing for differences between participant and comparison group members which involve multiple regression techniques are described. The process for obtaining estimates of net impact for different participant subpopulations and different interventions is made explicit.

A framework and methodology for evaluating costs and benefits is an added feature of the implementation manual. The manual concludes with a useful discussion of the complementary nature of process, gross outcome and net impact evaluations.

VOLUME VII

ISSUES RELATED TO NET IMPACT EVALUATION

Part A: Issues in Evaluating Costs and Benefits

PURPOSE
To obtain information on the tradeoffs between program costs and program costs and program benefits.

UTILITY TO USER
Assists the user in determining the social efficiency of JTPA, which has important implications for the allocation of program resources. Such information can help managers judge whether a program or activity should be expanded, reduced in size or scope, redirected or discontinued.

ASSUMPTIONS
Participants are expected to maintain, improve or restore their capacity to function effectively in the labor market--i.e., to increase their human capital. For the cost outlay of the program to have societal value, these benefits must equal or exceed the total social costs.

FRAMEWORK
A "human capital investment" framework is used in comparing monetary benefits against monetary costs in a benefit-cost analysis, and nonmonetary benefits against monetary costs in an effectiveness-cost analysis. Each of these comparisons, in the form of ratios, are used to estimate the return on human capital investment. Estimates can also be made of net present values and internal rates of return on investment using monetary benefits and costs.

Costs and benefits are measured from three perspectives and their value estimated: benefits received and costs borne by program participants, nonparticipants ("taxpayers"), and society. The latter costs and benefits represent the broadest perspective on the overall performance or social efficiency of a program.

Given time and resource constraints, it is recommended that benefit-cost analyses be attempted first, since the post-program increase in total before-tax earnings, as an overall summary measure of program impact, is given the greatest policy attention in JTPA. This approach can then be supplemented with effectiveness-cost analyses. To carry out the two kinds of analyses an extensive taxonomy of economic and noneconomic costs and benefits is identified for study, with an appropriate explanation of the problem of double-counting in analyzing relationships among benefits.

METHODS
Methods are described for calculating benefit-cost and effectiveness-cost ratios utilizing money costs, in order to estimate return on net human capital investment. Analytic techniques for qualifying these calculations are suggested, which adjust the dollar value of costs and benefits using an appropriate discount rate, compare their total values, and determine the social efficiency of the program based on the difference in the total dollar value of these costs and benefits. Examples of cost estimation strategies are provided, and their strengths and weaknesses explored.

Measuring and valuing benefits and costs are complex efforts. It is difficult to assign a dollar value to important nonmonetary benefits. Therefore it is recommended that one qualify costs and benefits that are measurable in dollars with a discussion of measurable noneconomic outcomes and difficult-to-measure noneconomic outcomes, which affect the overall benefit-cost calculation.

COMPLEMENTARY USE

This issue paper contributes directly to the evaluation of program impact: to gross impact studies and to the determination of net program impact. The results of benefit-cost or effectiveness-cost analyses can be usefully meshed with the findings yielded by both impact guides. Process evaluations can be helpful in identifying sources of costs and benefits, and suggesting ways the less tangible ones can be measured and valued. Finally, cost-benefit studies can suggest process issues which should be given more attention.

VOLUME VII ISSUES RELATED TO NET IMPACT EVALUATION

Part B: The Debate Over Experimental vs. Quasi-experimental Approaches

PURPOSE
To explore the strengths and weaknesses of using experimental vs. quasi-experimental research design in evaluating the impact of JTPA programs.

UTILITY TO USER
Assists the user in understanding the range of research designs which can be used in evaluating JTPA, alerting the user to the nature and sources of errors and biases which must be given attention in using designs along a continum from exploratory to experimental. It also helps the user to consider the major scientific, political and organizational tradeoffs involved in selecting one design approach over another.

ASSUMPTIONS
The purpose of evaluation is to come as close as possible to revealing "the truth" about the implementation and impact of social programs, particularly with respect to their intended goals, interventions and outcomes. It is well accepted that the application of scientific principles and methods is the evaluator's best route to this truth. However, even the most competent and rigorous use of scientific method can only approximate the truth by stating educated probabilities that things truly are as they appear to be from the analysis of unbiased information. These probabilities give us the most accurate estimates of the truth available to us.

The less-than-perfect but valuable determination of reality involves somewhat different tradeoffs under laboratory conditions as compared with the pragmatic settings of most ongoing social programs. Therefore a controversy persists about the optimum evaluation approach for studying programs in real-life policy settings at the state and local level.

FRAMEWORK
In this issue paper the above controversy is investigated in terms of three sets of tradeoffs: scientific, political and organizational. As a context for a discussion of these tradeoffs and their implications for evaluating JTPA, the general steps in the research process and their desired qualities are explored. Emphasis is on the development of a research design, as it applies to impact evaluations. The research design is a plan which guides the sampling of those to be studied, the direction of data, the analysis of that data, and the drawing of useful conclusions from that analysis.

Exploratory, descriptive, quasi-experimental and experimental research designs are discussed in relation to the "ideal experiment". A summary of some of the major kinds and sources of bias and error are provided to illustrate the scientific tradeoffs involved in these different approaches. It is noted that while the design of the ideal experiment overcomes most (but not all) of the major barriers to obtaining "the truth" about the research questions to be answered in an evaluation, some of its requirements may be costly politically, or may not be organizationally feasible.

Given the political and bureaucratic barriers encountered in carrying out experiments, it is suggested that a rigorous quasi-experimental approach which adjusts statistically for the absence of certain desirable experimental conditions may be more useful in evaluating the impact of JTPA at the state and local level.

COMPLEMENTARY USE

This issue paper complements the guides for implementing impact evaluations, particularly net impact studies of JTPA. In providing the context for the research design decisions recommended in these guides, this overview of the ongoing debate about experimental vs. non-experimental research strategies affords states and SDAs with a rationale for considering political and organizational factors affecting evaluation, as well as scientific supports and constraints. It also encourages the development of a new relationship between practitioners and researchers with respect to a greater sensitivity to and appreciation of the different influences which inevitably shape evaluation decisions.

HOW TO OBTAIN THE MATERIALS

The set JTPA Evaluation at the State and Local Level, or individual volumes within the set can be obtained from the Washington State Employment Security Department. Purchasers are encouraged to order a full set at a reduced rate, rather than individual volumes, because of the integrated and complementary nature of the volumes within the set. If you have not received an order form with this Overview Volume and wish to place an order, please contact the Project at the address below:

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